Insanity - 1935

'HEXED' BOY FAILS IN MENTALITY TEST

Psychiatrist Urges Child Who Slashed Baby Be Sent to Feeble-Minded Home.

Times

BUSY DAY FOR FRITZES

2-23-35

Pennsylvania Father Stamps Outside Clinic and Defends Woman Who Uttered Spells.

New York

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa., Feb. 22.—While State police and county officials continued an investigation of "hex" practices in Lycoming County, Dr. Horace V. Pike, psychiatrist of the Danville State Hospital, today recommended the commitment of John Fritz Jr., 5 years old, to the Pennhurst School for the Feeble Minded.

The boy slashed his baby brother, James, with a butcher knife last Monday while under the influence of what the parents were told was "a mischievous devil." Dr. Pike, after an examination, said the boy was a "mental deficient."

The boy's father, however, stamping impatiently on the sidewalk outside the clinic, remained convinced of the efficacy of the faith healer who had treated his son. He expressed his contempt for those who "are trying to shake my faith."

The father said his only wish was to get his wife and their three boys back to their cabin home in the forest area of Lycoming County near Larry's Creek, where investigators prying into the "hex" practices of the county would not disturb them.

Mother To Be Examined.

It appeared unlikely that his wish would be granted, for Dr. Pike recommended that the mother, who is 45, and the oldest son, Floyd, 9, remain in the care of the County Children's Aid Society until they could have a complete mental and physical examination.

The youngest son, James, 8 months old, who for four days was in Williamsport Hospital recovering from the wounds which John inflicted with a butcher knife, was released from the hospital today and was placed in care of his parents.

The father did not appear to be alarmed by the possibility that John Jr. might attack the baby again and merely said he would try to keep the child from being "hissed" upon by his infant brother again.

It was a busy day for the Fritz family. They arrived here early in the morning with the Rev. F. B. Norris, a Methodist clergyman, to whom Fritz is understood to have appealed "to see that I get a square deal."

First came a visit to the hospital to see the baby and then the trip to the clinic.

Hunt for "Hex" Doctors Balked.

There Dr. Pike questioned Mrs. Fritz and Floyd and spent several hours testing the reactions of John Jr. The examination was said to have been made at the request of the father, but it was apparent that if Fritz had requested it, he regretted it later.

While waiting outside the clinic, Fritz insisted that Mrs. Mary Crider of South Williamsport, said to have mumbled incantations over John Jr., and to have advised leaving him alone with the baby that he might be healed, "is a woman of the highest reputation and a Christian."

Investigators continued their attempts to learn the names of "hex" doctors of the vicinity, but in most cases were able to elicit little information from residents, who displayed a faith to match Fritz's, and resented questioning.